

Europe; it's vital that Germany take the lead on a lot of issues. And I look forward to working with the Chancellor on common objectives. And my first impressions, with 45 minutes alone in the Oval Office, were incredibly positive. She's smart—[laughter]—she's plenty capable. She's got kind of a spirit to her that is appealing. She loves freedom.

I was particularly touched by hearing about her early life in Communist Germany. There's something uplifting to talk to somebody who knows the difference between just talking about tyranny and living in freedom and actually done it.

So we're going to have a very good relationship. And that's important for our respective people. I'm looking forward to consultations, visits, contacts, phone calls,

all the things you do. And now I'm going to take her to lunch. [Laughter]

Thank you.

*Chancellor Merkel.* Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:37 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; China's Ambassador to the United Nations Wang Guangya; and former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany. Chancellor Merkel and two reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

## Remarks Following a Meeting Business Leaders on Central American Relief and Reconstruction Efforts

*January 13, 2006*

I want to thank Secretary Rice and Ambassador Hughes for joining three of our Nation's most distinguished business leaders here at the White House to discuss a very important project, and that's raising money for those affected by the storms and natural disaster in Guatemala and Honduras.

Ours is a Nation that when we see human suffering, we respond. And we responded at the governmental level, because we had our military help provide infrastructure and logistics and get supplies to people who were hurting. We helped through USAID. And now it's time for the private sector in our country to step up and support the efforts of those Guatemalans struggling to get their lives back together and those in Honduras doing the same thing.

The fund that's going to be raised is made up of private donations. People can find out more about it on what's called—

a web site called [hurricaneaction.org](http://hurricaneaction.org). I think the site went up today, if I'm not mistaken. It's a place for people to come and access and to find out how they can join other Americans as to how to contribute. The money will go for things such as education of displaced families or infrastructure rebuilding, with a particular emphasis on reforestation or on microloans to help the economy get back on its feet in these countries.

So I want to thank you all very much for coming. I appreciate your interest. Thank you for traveling down to the region to take an assessment of the needs. And most importantly, thanks for coming back and calling our citizens to action. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:34 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape

was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## The President's Radio Address *January 14, 2006*

Good morning. Last October, I was proud to nominate Judge Sam Alito to be an Associate Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. This week, Judge Alito testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the American people saw a man of character and intelligence. He forthrightly answered questions with grace and composure and showed his personal humility and legal brilliance, qualities that have made him one of America's most accomplished and respected judges.

In his opening statement to the committee, Judge Alito offered an eloquent description of the proper role of a judge. He put it this way: "A judge cannot have any agenda; a judge cannot have any preferred outcome in any particular case. The judge's only obligation is to the rule of law. In every single case, the judge has to do what the law requires."

Judge Alito has embodied this understanding of a judge's proper role throughout his distinguished career. He has participated in thousands of appeals, and he has authored hundreds of opinions. His record shows that he strictly and fairly interprets the Constitution and laws and does not try to legislate from the bench or impose his personal preference on the people. As the American people saw this week, Judge Alito always approaches the law in a thoughtful, fair, and openminded way.

Throughout his life, Sam Alito has demonstrated a mastery of the law, great decency, and a strong commitment to public service. As a young man, he wore his country's uniform in the Army Reserve and achieved the rank of captain. Early in his legal career, he worked as a Federal pro-

secutor. As Assistant to the Solicitor General, Sam Alito argued 12 cases before the Supreme Court. He later served in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, where he provided constitutional advice for the President and the executive branch.

In 1987, President Reagan named Sam Alito the United States Attorney for the District of New Jersey, the top Federal prosecutor in one of the Nation's largest Federal districts. The Senate confirmed him by unanimous consent. In this important post, Sam Alito showed a passionate commitment to justice and the rule of law and earned a reputation for being both tough and fair. He moved aggressively against white-collar and environmental crimes, drug trafficking, organized crime, and violations of civil rights. In 1990, President Bush nominated Sam Alito for the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, and the Senate once again confirmed him by unanimous consent. He's served with distinction on that court for 15 years, and he has more prior judicial experience than any Supreme Court nominee in more than 70 years.

Sam Alito's brilliance, integrity, and accomplishments have gained him respect and praise from his colleagues and from attorneys across the political spectrum. This week, fellow judges from the Third Circuit publicly testified in support of his confirmation, and they praised his integrity and fairness. The American Bar Association gave Judge Alito a unanimous rating of "well-qualified," the ABA's highest possible rating. The ABA concluded that Judge Alito meets "the highest standards" of "integrity,